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ABSTRACT

To identify the information that parents receive about their children's school experiences and to investigate the relationship between this information base and parents' aspirations and expectations regarding their children, a study was conducted of 93 parents of first and fourth graders. The parents were interviewed and administered questionnaires to gather information on family characteristics; the content and quality of parental expectations for their children's academic performance; aspirations regarding children's occupational and educational goals; and the sources and level of information received regarding their children's development, grades and tests, and school events and policies. Results included the following findings: (1) 33% of the parents reported receiving considerable information about school events, while 45% reported receiving no information about their child's physical development; (2) parental aspirations for children ranged from happy with any choice (20%), completion of at least high school (36%), to completion of a vocation or college degree program (31%); (3) parents of first graders reported lower expectations for child performance than parents of fourth graders, while expectations were lower for first grade boys than for girls; (4) parental perception of consistency of information was significantly related to their commitment to aspirations; and (5) parental perceptions of their children's current performance was related more closely to their information base than were their aspirations for the future. (Contains 22 references.) (BCY)

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School-based Information to Parents and Parents' Educational/Occupational Aspirations for Their Children

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School-based Information to Parents and Parents' Educational/Occupational Aspirations for Their Children

Even though children's success in school is important throughout their school years, their experiences in early elementary school are particularly influential (Entwisle & Hayduk, 1978; 1982). Studies indicate that patterns begin to be formed during the primary grades that are predictive of later behaviors and decisions (Spivack & Cianci, 1987).

One critical influence on children's success in school is parental support of children. Parents' support of their children can be in the form of positive, yet realistic expectations and aspirations for children, attention and responsivity to what's happening in children's lives and in the provision of information and experiences that foster development.

Studies have identified a strong relationship between parents' expectations about their children's abilities and children's self-perceptions and performance (Alexander & Entwisle, 1988; Entwisle & Hayduk, 1978). For example, studies have documented the impact of parents' expectations about their children's math and reading performance on children's subsequent school performance and on children's views of their academic abilities. More specifically, when parents held high, yet realistic expectations for their children's school performance, the children tended to work hard and when parents had lower expectations the children tended to relax and not work as hard (Alexander & Entwisle, 1988; Entwisle & Hayduk, 1978).

Parents' aspirations for children have been identified as an important family variable related to children's school experiences, serving as an index of the general family environment that is predictive of children's success in school (Marjoribanks, 1990; Scott-Jones, 1984). In general, children whose parents have relatively high aspirations for them tend to do better on tests of academic achievement and cognitive development (Marjoribanks, 1987; Scott-Jones, 1984).

Due to the importance of parental expectations and aspirations for children's success in school, a critical area to investigate is correlates of parental expectations about children's school performance and educational/occupational goals for their children. Attention to factors which may influence parental cognitions about children's educational and occupational experience recognizes the parent as a cognitive being, one who processes information from a vast number and variety of sources (Goodnow & Collins, 1990). A focus on correlates helps to contextualize the parental experience by attending to structural and process variables, rather than pulling parents out of context and studying only <u>what</u> they believe. As Seginer (1983) notes, the most prevalent emphasis within this area of study has been the link between parental cognitions and behaviors and child outcomes. Less attention has been given to the correlates of parents' expectations and aspirations.

One potentially important, but little investigated source of parental ideas regarding children's school experience is

information from the school about children's performance and experiences in the school setting (Epstein, 1990; Finlayson, 1971; Seginer, 1983). This source is of interest due to the major influence that school has in a family's life once children enter the public school system. Additionally, the school plays the role of an informant about the child's experience at school. The school is also an arena in which the child's competence is "tested" formally and informally. Little is known about the process through which parents come to formulate and/or reformulate educational aspirations and expectations about their children's school performance.

Information that parents receive about their children's school experience may vary in form (i.e., verbal, written), primary source (i.e., teacher, target child), amount, accuracy, helpfulness, consistency, and nature (i.e, positive, negative). The information parents receive also may differ across parents. Moreover, children differ in terms of their ability to function in the school setting, schools differ in school to home communication policies, and teachers differ in their thoughts and practices regarding school-to-home communication (Epstein, 1986; 1988; 1990). Also, some parents may have limited reading ability or lack of resources necessary (i.e., phone, transportation) to benefit from common modes of school-to-parent communication.

Information from the school may be directly related to parents' educational aspirations and expectations for several reasons. First, information from the school and educational

expectations and aspirations are both related to children within the school context. Thus, it is logical to assume that information from the school about children's experiences may be a potential source of influence (i.e., justifying or refuting) on parents' educational aspirations and expectations. Second, information from the school is one of the few ways in which parents can find out about how and what their children are doing in school. In the absence of information from the school, parents would need to rely on other informants who would most likely not have access to the same quality or quantity of information.

A conceptual model used in many research studies (i.e., Goodnow, 1988) on the possible linkages between parental cognitions, parental behaviors and children's development was utilized for this study, with an additional component added to the model. The component of information about children's school experience was added as a possible source or correlate of parental cognitions. (Note: This paper reports on one component of a larger study which utilized the complete model).

The present study focuses on concurrent relationships between information about children's school experiences and parental cognitions. The study of concurrent relationships is a vital step toward increased understanding of the relationships between information about children's school experiences and parental expectations and aspirations. The study is designed to identify characteristics of the information base that are related to parental cognitions.

In sum, the aims of the study were to:

(a) describe the information parents receive about their children's school experiences (hereafter known as the information base); and

(b) to investigate the relationship between characteristics of the information base and parents' educational/occupational aspirations and expectations about their children's school performance.

Method

Subjects

Ninety-three parents of first and fourth graders participated in this study. Families were recruited through the public schools. Twenty -eight mothers and 18 fathers of first graders and 28 mothers and 19 fathers of fourth graders were recruited for this study. The mean age of all parents was 33.04. All but one of the parents was white. Eighteen percent completed some high school (1-3 years), 44% completed high school, 22.6% completed some college or vocational school and 15.1% completed vocational or a 2-year college degree program.

Twenty percent of the parents were single parents (N=19). All of the single parents were female. Total number of children in the household ranged from one (10.8%) to 6 (1.1%). The mean number of children was 2.69.

Of the 56 families, 50.5% had an annual income of $20,000 to $25,000. Twenty-seven percent had an annual income of $10,000 to $20,000 and 17% had an annual income of less than $10,000. Mean

socioeconomic status as computed by the Hollingshead four factor index was 24.93 (SD = 11.19). These figures place the sample mean in category II of the Hollingshead: Machine operators, semiskilled workers.

Instruments

The Family Information measure and the Parent Expectations measure were in the form of a questionnaire. The Parent-School Information Exchange -- Parent Form and the Educational/ Occupational measure were part of the interview.

Family Information Questionnaire. The Family Information Questionnaire was constructed for this study. Questions included parents's age in years, current occupation, education level, race and marital status. Also, parents were asked to report yearly household income and age and sex of the target child.

Parent-School Information Exchange -- Parent Form. In order to characterize the information base available to parents of first and fourth graders, the Parent-School Information Exchange -- Parent Form was developed specifically for this study based on work by Epstein (1986), Becker and Epstein (1982) and Fuqua, Hegland, and Karas (1985). Predetermined categories of information were used to assist parents in thinking about the different kinds of information available about children's school experiences. Categories included information about their children's: 1) academic/cognitive development, 2) physical development, 3) social/emotional development, and 4) typical day at school. Categories also included: 5) how grades are given, 6) tests/exams

given, 7) information about school events, 8) information about school policy.

For each of these types of information parents were asked to determine how much of each type of information was available, degree to which the information was requested, the main source of information, and the most common form(s) in which the information was communicated. For three of the types of information (i.e., information about their children's academic/cognitive, physical, and socio-emotional development), additional questions were asked which included: degree to which the information was positive or negative, perceived accuracy of the information, perceived helpfulness of the information and the degree of consistency of the information over time. Test-retest reliability ranged from .52, $p < .05$ to .91, $p > .01$, $n = 18$). The test-retest data was collected between 3 and 4 weeks after the initial interview.

Parent Expectations. The Parent Expectations questionnaire was designed to assess the content and quality of parental expectations about their children's school experiences, based on studies conducted by Entwisle and Hayduk (1978; 1982) and Alexander and Entwisle (1988). Parents were asked to assign the grade of A, B, C, D or F for each subject in terms of what they expected their children to get on their next report card in math, reading and conduct. Parents were then asked to report how sure and how strongly they felt about their expectations. These two questions were designed to tap the parents' degree of commitment to their expectations (Goodnow & Collins, 1991).

Next, parents were asked how they thought their children compared to other children in the child's school in terms of ability to do school work (Entwisle & Hayduk, 1978; 1982). Again, following parents' response to the question they were asked how sure they were and how strongly they felt about how their child compared with other children in the school.

Internal consistency reliability was .85 (n=93). Test-retest reliability (3-4 week interval) for level of expectations was .95, $p < .01$ and for degree of commitment to expectations was .85, $p < .01$ (n=18).

Educational/Occupational Aspirations Measure. This measure was designed to assess the level of and degree of commitment to educational/occupational aspirations for their children and was based on the work of Rodman (1963). Parents were asked to think about different types of jobs based on different levels of education. The five types were jobs that require: (1) some high school, (2) a high school degree, (3) vocational or technical training, (4) a four year college degree, and (5) graduate work. Parents were provided with a rich sampling of types of jobs that fit within each category. For example, within the circle representing jobs that require some high school were the occupations of housekeeper, janitor, worker in a fast-food restaurant, gardener, restaurant server and gas station attendant.

Parents were asked to respond to the different types in terms of the degree of happiness and or unhappiness with each of the five groups of jobs. Finally, parents were asked how strongly they felt

about their aspirations for their children's educational/ occupational future. Test-retest reliability was .93, $p < .02$ for level of aspirations and .95, $p < .01$ for degree of commitment to aspirations.

Procedure

Parents completed the Family Information and Parent Expectations questionnaires prior to the interview. The interview team (two trained graduate assistants) conducted the interview portion of the measurement package in participants' homes at times convenient for the families. Data were obtained from the mother and father separately by interviewing in different rooms.

Results

Two stages of analyses were conducted. First descriptive statistics are presented for the information base variables and parental cognition variables. Second, analyses related to the predictions and exploratory questions are presented. These data were primarily analyzed with correlations, analysis of variance and stepwise multiple regression.

Description of Information Base Reported by Parents

Amount of Information. Parents reported receiving the most information about school events and the least amount of information about their children's physical development. Thirty-three percent of parents reported receiving a lot of information about school events, whereas 45% reported receiving no information about their children's physical development. Fourteen percent of parents reported receiving no information about daily classroom activities,

15% reported receiving no information about their children's social-emotional development, 10% reported receiving no information about how grades are given and what test are given, and 5% reported receiving no information about school policy.

Degree to Which Information was Requested. Overall, most information was reported to be sent to parents without parents requesting the information. The type of information for which parents requested the least information was school events, with 83% of parents reporting that all of the information was sent to them without the parents asking for it. The type of information requested the most by parents was information about their children's daily classroom activities.

Sources of Information. Overall, the two most commonly reported sources of information about children's school experiences were people who work at the school and the target child. Information about daily classroom activities was the only type of information for which the target child was reported to be the most common source of information.

Form of Information. In general, the most prevalent form of information dissemination was written communication, followed by in-person communications. Information about children's daily classroom activities (31%) was the type of information that was reported by the highest percentage of parents to be communicated in-person (i.e., target child, casual meeting in the hall with the teacher, etc.)

Degree to which information is positive or negative. Overall, parents reported receiving fairly positive information about their children's academic, social-emotional, and physical development. Over half of the parents (69%) reported that the information about children's physical development was positive. Approximately 50% of the parents reported that information about academic/cognitive development was positive. Fifty-two percent of the parents reported that socio-emotional information was both positive and negative.

Degree of perceived accuracy. Overall, information about physical development was reported as the most accurate and information about social-emotional development was perceived to be the least accurate. However, a greater percentage of parents reported that information about social-emotional development was completely accurate than information about physical or academic development.

Degree of perceived helpfulness. In general, parents viewed the information received to be helpful. Information about academic development was reported to be the most helpful, followed by information about social-emotional development, and finally information about physical development. About 6% of parents reported that information they received about their children's physical development was not at all helpful.

Degree of perceived consistency of the information. Information about children's physical development was reported to be the most consistent, followed by information about social-

emotional development and information about academic/cognitive development. Yet, a greater percentage of parents reported that information about social-emotional development was very much the same over time.

Intercorrelations between information base variables are presented in Table 1. Due to the fairly high and significant correlation between degree of accuracy and degree of helpfulness (r (91) = .51, $p < .01$), these two variables were combined to create one variable entitled evaluation of the information.

Insert Table 1 about here

Parental Cognition Variables

Level of Parental Expectations. Level of expectations ranged from 2.5 to 5.0, with a possible range of 1 to 5. The higher score indicated higher levels of expectations for children's school performance. About 8% of the parents expected their children to receive As in all subjects (math, reading, and conduct) and to be one of the best in the class. The majority of parents expected their children to make some combination of As, Bs and to be average, above average or among the best in their class. Five percent of parents expected their children to make some combination of Bs, Cs and Ds and to be below average in terms of their ability to do school work.

Degree of commitment to expectations. Degree of commitment scores ranged from 1.75 to 4, with a possible range of 1 to 4. The

higher score indicated a higher degree of commitment to expectations. Seventy-two percent of parents reported "pretty strong" to "extremely strong" levels of commitment to expectations while 28% of parents reported not very strong to somewhat strong levels.

Level of Educational/Occupational Aspirations. Scores for the level of aspirations ranged from 1 to 5, with higher scores indicating higher levels of aspirations of parents for their children. About 20% of parents reported that they would be happy regardless of the educational/occupational choice of their children. Almost 36% of parents reported that they would be happy if their children at least completed high school and would not be happy if their children did not complete high school. About 4% of parents reported that they would be happy with their children completing high school or college, but not with vocational school. Thirty-one percent of the parents reported that they would be happy if their children completed vocational school, 4-year-college degree program or a graduate program, while 1% reported that they would be happy only if their children completed a four-year-college program, but unhappy with graduate school or vocational school, some high school or completing high school. The remaining 8% of parents reported that they would only be happy if their children worked in occupations that required a graduate degree or a four-year college degree. No parents reported that they would be happy only if their children attained a graduate degree.

Degree of Commitment to Aspirations. Scores for degree of

commitment to aspirations ranged from 1 to 4, with higher scores indicating a higher degree of commitment. Nine percent of parents reported that they did not feel very strong about their hopes for their children's educational/occupational future, while 29% reported that they felt somewhat strong. Forty-three percent of the parents reported that they felt pretty strong, while the remaining 19.4% reported that they felt extremely strong about aspirations for their children.

Overall, parents had fairly positive expectations and moderate to high aspirations for their children. Most parents also reported some degree of commitment to expectations and aspirations. Intercorrelations between parental cognition variables are presented in Table 2. The two expectation variables were significantly and positively correlated (r (91) = .58, $p < .0001$). Also, the two aspiration variables were significantly and positively correlated (r (91) = .29, $p < .005$). However, expectation variables were not significantly correlated with aspiration variables. Thus, expectations and aspirations appear to be tapping two distinct parental cognitions.

Insert Table 2 about here

Differences in information base variables as a function of child sex, parent sex, and child's grade in school.

To assess whether the information base variables differed by parent sex, child sex, and child grade, a series of 2 X 2 X 2

multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVAs) were executed. MANOVAs involved the between subjects variables of parent sex (mother, father), child sex (boy, girl) and child grade (first, fourth), followed by univariate ANOVAs. The dependent variables were the information base variables. No multivariate effects were found.

Differences in parental cognitions as a function of child sex, parent sex and child's grade in school

Parents' expectations. To assess whether parents' level of expectations and degree of commitment to expectations varied by parent sex, child grade in school and by child sex, a 2 X 2 X 2 MANOVA was executed, followed by univariate ANOVAs. Between subjects independent variables were parent sex (mother, father), child sex (boy, girl), and child grade (first, fourth). The dependent variables were level of expectation and degree of commitment to expectations. The zero-order correlations between the two dependent variables was r (91) = .58, $p < .0001$. Results indicated a significant multivariate effect of child grade, F (2, 84) = 7.07, $p < .001$, but not for child sex or parent sex. Parents of first graders reported lower expectations for their children's school performance than parents of fourth graders.

There was also a significant two-way interaction between child sex and child grade, F (2,84) = 5.67, $p < .005$. In addition, the ANOVAs for both dependent variables yielded a significant 2-way interaction (F (1,85) = 10.50, $p < .002$ for level of expectation and F (1,85) = 5.88, $p < .01$, for degree of commitment to expectations). Means are presented in Table 3. For first graders

there was a significant difference between boys and girls for parents' level of expectations, F (1,45) = 10.94, $p < .002$. For fourth graders, there were no significant differences between boys and girls for parents' level of expectations. For boys, there were significant differences between first and fourth graders in terms of parents' level of expectations, F (1,48) = 22.49, $p < .0001$, but not for girls.

Insert Table 3 about here

In terms of parental degree of commitment to expectations, for first graders there was a significant difference between boys and girls, F (1,45) = 4.57, $p < .04$, but not for fourth graders. Also, for boys, there were significant differences between first and fourth graders, F (1,48) = 22.15, $p < .0001$, but not for girls. Means are presented in Table 4.

Insert Table 4 about here

In general, parents of first grade boys tended to report lower expectations than parents of first grade girls, fourth grade girls and boys. Parents of fourth graders had significantly higher expectations than parents of first graders. However, this appears to be the case for only parents of first grade boys and not for parents of first grade girls.

Parents of first graders reported significantly lower degrees

of commitment to expectations than parents of fourth graders. However, this was the case for only first grade boys and not for first grade girls.

Parents' aspirations. In order to assess whether parents' level of and degree of commitment to aspirations varied by child sex, parent sex, and child grade, a 2 X 2 X 2 MANOVA was executed, followed by univariate ANOVAs. Between subjects independent variables were parent sex (mother, father), child sex (girl, boy) and child grade (first, fourth). The dependent variables were level of and degree of commitment to aspirations. No significant multivariate effects were found.

Relationships between characteristics of the reported information base and parental expectations and aspirations

Only one prediction was made in reference to the link between information from the school and parental expectations and aspirations, due to the paucity of research in the area. The prediction was:

> The greater the degree of perceived consistency of information, the greater the degree of commitment to educational/occupational aspirations for the child and expectations for the child's school performance.

This prediction is based on cognitive dissonance theory, in that the theory proposes that when information is received which is perceived as consistent with previous information, there is less of a need to change existing cognitions to fit the new information (Oskamp, 1991).

To test this prediction, Pearson-product moment correlations were computed. For the dependent variable, degree of commitment to expectations, partial correlations were computed controlling for child grade and child sex, due to the significant effects of child sex and grade on parents' degree of commitment to expectations. For the degree of commitment to aspirations, a Pearson-product moment correlation was computed without controlling for parent sex, child sex or child grade.

The zero-order correlations between degree of commitment to expectations and degree of consistency of information was r (91) = .35, $p < .001$. The partial correlation, after controlling for child grade and sex was r (91) = .33, $p < .001$. The zero-order correlation between degree of commitment to aspirations and degree of consistency of information was low to moderate, r (91) = .34, $p < .05$. Results provided support for the prediction that the greater the perceived consistency of the information, the greater the degree of commitment to expectations and aspirations. Parents who reported receiving more consistent information about their children's school performance, reported a higher degree of commitment to aspirations and expectations.

The remaining linkages between characteristics of the information base and parental expectations and aspirations were stated as exploratory questions and were addressed with a series of stepwise multiple regressions. Stepwise regression was used due to the lack of any theoretical or empirical base to guide the preplanned entry of variables. The use of stepwise techniques

assists the process of investigating what characteristics of the information base are important in the prediction of selected parental cognition variables. For all of the regressions, inspection of the casewise plot and the normal probability plot of standardized residuals indicated that the standardized residuals were independently and normally distributed. Also, the scatterplots of residuals indicated a fairly rectangular shape (evidence of linearity) and that the residuals were homoscedastic (i.e., approximately equal at all predicted level of the dependent variable). No outliers were identified.

For the dependent variable, level of expectations, all of the information base variables and child grade and sex were entered as predictor variables. (Child sex and grade were entered due to the significant main and interaction effects with parents' level of expectations). Table 5 displays the standardized regression coefficients (B), the squared semipartial correlations (R square change), and R multiple, R square and adjusted R square after entry of the predictor variables. The results of the overall analysis revealed a multiple correlation of .63, $\underline{F}$ (2,90) = 29.85, $\underline{p}$ < .0001. R multiple was significantly different from zero at the end of each step in which variables entered the equation. Degree of positivity - negativity accounted for the greatest proportion of variance in level of expectation (34%, R multiple = .58, $\underline{F}$ (1,91) = 46.29, $\underline{p}$ < .0001).

Insert Table 5 about here

Grade of child also entered the equation on step 2. After step 2, with both degree of positivity - negativity and grade of child in the equation, R square = .40, F incremental (2,90) = 9.22, p < .003. Thus, an additional 6% of the variance in level of expectations was explained by grade of the child. None of the other variables entered the equation.

For the dependent variable, parents' degree of commitment to expectations, all of the information base variables and child grade and sex were entered as predictor variables. Table 6 displays the results of the stepwise multiple regression. The results of the overall analysis revealed a multiple correlation of .52, F (2,90) = 16.93, p < .0001. R multiple was significantly different from zero at the end of each step in which variables entered the equation. Degree of positivity - negativity accounted for 18% of the variance, with R multiple = ,43, F (1,91) = 20.46, p < .0001.

Grade of child also entered the equation on step 2. After step 2, with both predictor variables in the regression equation, R square = .27, F incremental (2,90) = 11.12, p < .001. Thus, an additional 9% of the variance was explained by grade of the child. None of the other variables entered the equation.

Insert Table 6 about here

For the dependent variable, parents' level of occupational/ educational aspirations, all of the information base variables were entered as predictor variables. None of the variables entered the equation.

For the final dependent variable, parents' degree of commitment to aspirations, all of the information base variables were entered as predictor variables. Only degree of consistency of the information entered the equation. The zero-order correlation between degree of consistency and degree of commitment to aspirations was r (91) = .34, $p < .05$. Also, the zero-order correlation between evaluation of the information (i.e., a combined variable of the degree of perceived helpfulness and accuracy) and degree of commitment to aspirations was r (91) = .25, $p < .01$. Both of these variables may be important predictors of parents' degree of commitment to aspirations, yet due to the significant correlation between consistency and evaluation (r (91) = .30, $p <$ .01), the variables may be redundant when entered into a multiple regression equation.

In sum, the information base variables of, degree of positivity - negativity and degree of perceived consistency were significantly and positively correlated with parents' level and degree of commitment to expectations. Child grade also accounted for a significant proportion of the variance in parental expectations. None of the information base variables was significantly correlated with parents' level of aspirations. Degree to which information was reported to be consistent, accurate

and helpful were significantly and positively correlated with parents' degree of commitment to aspirations.

Discussion

Children's success in school is related to many factors. Parents' positive, yet realistic educational/occupational aspirations for their children and expectations for school performance are linked to children's success in school (Entwisle & Hayduk, 1978; 1982; Marjoribanks, 1979; 1987). Parental involvement in their children's school lives is also linked to children's success in school (Epstein, 1990). One of the most prevalent types of parental involvement is communication between schools and families.

Once school-aged children are within the school system, parents begin to receive information about their children's school experiences (Becker & Epstein, 1982). Feedback from the school has been noted by several researchers as being an important source of information about children's development during the elementary years (Garner & Sperry, 1968; Finlayson, 1971; Epstein, 1986; 1988). Yet little is known regarding how information about children's school experiences is related to parental cognitions (i.e., aspirations, expectations).

Description of Information Received by Parents about their children's school experience

This study provided an interesting characterization of the information received by parents about their children's school experiences. This description is based on parents' perceptions of

the information they received. All parents received some information about their children's school experiences. Yet, several parents reported not receiving any information about several types of information except academic and thinking skills and school events (all parents reported receiving at least a little information about these types). The least prevalent type was information about children's physical development. Perhaps school personnel feel as if they are not qualified to provide much information within this domain.

The majority of parents reported that most of the information was sent to them without them requesting the information. This finding is consistent with what Epstein (1986) reported in that most of the information flows from school to home and not at the request of the parent. One may speculate that the parents in this study either felt satisfied with the amount of information they received or, parents did not feel comfortable asking for additional information or did not know the process for acquiring more information.

The most prevalent form of information dissemination was written communication, with fewer verbal or face-to-face interactions. Epstein (1986) reported similar findings. In a study with over 1000 parents only about 4% of the parents reported being visited by the teacher in their home and about 40% reported being called by the teacher on the phone.

Epstein (1988) has suggested that communication between schools and families take many forms to meet the varying needs of

parents. Limited reading skills may limit the utility of written materials for some parents. The use of phone communication may not be an options either, particularly for low-income families without telephones. Some (12.5%) of the families in this sample not only did not have phones, but had no private source of transportation, limiting their ability to visit the school for conferences, for school events or even informally before and after school. Extra effort from both parents and teachers (and other school personnel) is required when the traditional forms of communication are not possible.

Most parents tended to evaluate the information they received as accurate and helpful at least to some degree. Such findings may indicate that parents are trusting of information from the school.

Relation between Information about Children's School Experiences with Parents' Aspirations and Expectations

Preliminary analyses revealed that parents' tended to have the lowest expectations for first grade boys. What might be the reason for this finding? Parents of first grade boys may have perceived their child as maturing later and thus not reporting as high of expectations for their school performance during first grade. Alternatively, the first grade boys may have been performing at a lower level. These results are somewhat different than Entwisle and Hayduk (1978; 1982) reported in their longitudinal study of the early years of school for children. They found that parents of younger children tended to have higher expectations. They also found that parents tended to adjust their

expectations over time to be more in line with children's actual performance (at least as measured by grades). Entwisle and Hayduk (1978; 1982) gathered data concerning parents' expectations before parents received their children's first report card. Because data for this study was gathered during the third quarter of school, parents of first graders, for this sample may have received enough feedback to have adjusted their expectations.

Results also revealed that parents of first grade boys reported significantly lower degree of commitment to expectations, but parents of first grade girls did not. This finding may be related to the relationship between level of expectations and degree of commitment to expectations. Parents who reported higher levels of expectations also reported higher degree of commitment to expectations. This makes intuitive sense, in that parents would more likely be less committed to beliefs about their children that are not as positive.

In regard to the more direct linkage between information base variables and parental cognitions, parents who reported receiving more consistent information about their children's school performance also reported a higher degree of commitment to aspirations and expectations. Parents who received consistent information may have been more trusting of the information, due to their ability to anticipate or predict the nature of the information they received, resulting in a higher degree of commitment to their beliefs.

In addition, findings revealed that the more positive the

information, the higher the level of and degree of commitment to expectations. Information from the school may have informed, at least in part, parental beliefs about their children's school performance. These results could also be interpreted to indicate that high parental expectations are positively related to children's school performance as transmitted to parents via information from the school. Due to the correlational design of this study, the direction of influence can not be determined, yet results indicate the existence of a relationship between information from the school (i.e., nature of the information) and parental expectations.

Based on the findings of this study, it appears that parents' thoughts about their children's present school performance (i.e., expectations) were more consistently predicted by selected characteristics of the information based than parents' thoughts about their children's educational-occupational future. No significant relationships were found between information base variables and level of aspirations. It makes sense that information would have a stronger relationship with expectations than aspirations. If one considers the definition of expectations in that they are more tied to reality, information from the school is one source of "reality" about their children's school performance (Finn, 1972). Information about children's school experience may not have such a strong relationship with aspirations, which tend to be more idealistic and future-oriented (Scott-Jones, 1984).

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Table 1

Intercorrelations between
Information Base Variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Amount of Information	--	--	--	--	--	--
2. Degree to which Info is Requested	-.04	--	--	--	--	--
3. Positivity-Negativity	.11	.13	--	--	--	--
4. Degree of Consistency	-.03	.10	.51*	--	--	--
5. Degree of Accuracy	.30*	.14	.34*	.35*	--	--
6. Degree of Helpfulness	.31*	-.10	.12	.18	.51*	--

n=93
*p < .01

Table 2

Intercorrelations between Parent Cognition Variables

Variable	1	2	3	4
1. Level of Expectations	--	--	--	--
2. Degree of Commitment to Expectations	.58**	--	--	--
3. Level of Aspirations	.14	.03	--	--
4. Degree of Commitment to Aspirations	.09	.09	.29*	--

n=93
*p < .005
**p < .0001

Mean Parental Level of Expectations for Children's School Performance as a Function of Children's Sex and Grade in School

	Children's Grade	
	First	Fourth
Children's Sex		
Male	3.51 (.62)a	4.25 (.47)b
Female	4.07 (.52)c	4.07 (.55)bc

Note. Numbers in parentheses are standard deviations. Parental level of expectations could range from 1 to 5, with a 1 for low expectations and a 5 for high expectations. Means not sharing the same subscript are significantly different (Scheffe´ test, $p < .05$).

Mean Parental Degree of Commitment to Expectations for Children's School Performance as a Function of Children's Sex and Grade in School

	Children's Grade	
	First	Fourth
Children's Sex		
Male	2.66 (.58)a	3.35 (.44)c
Female	3.01 (.53)b	3.12 (.61)bc

Note. Numbers in parentheses are standard deviations. Parental degree of commitment to expectations could range from 1 to 4, with a 1 for low commitment and a 4 for high commitment. Means not sharing the same subscript are significantly different (Scheffe´ test, $p < .05$).

Stepwise Multiple Regression of Level of Expectations on Information Base Variables, Child Sex and Child Grade

Step	Variables	Standardized B	R Multiple	R Square Change
1	Positivity-Negativity	.58	.58	.34
2	Positivity-Negativity	.55		
	Child grade	.25	.63	.06

Final Model:
R Square = .40
Adjusted R Square = .39
R Multiple = .63**

n=93
** p < .0001

Stepwise Multiple Regression of Commitment to Expectations on Information Base Variables, Child Sex and Child Grade

Step	Variables	Standardized B	R Multiple	R Square Change
1	Positivity - Negativity	.43	.43	.18
2	Positivity - Negativity	.39		
	Child grade	.30	.52	.09

Final Model:
R Square = .27
Adjusted R Square = .26
R Multiple = .52**

n=93
**p < .0001